1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
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on Atchin, where I had become familiar with many of the problems involved, and was thus primed with a knowledge of the general outlines of Vao culture before ever I set foot on the island. In the second place, I was already known personally to many of the Vao natives who intermarry with Atchin. In the third place, I had the good fortune to meet immediately with a first-class informant, Ma-taru, a man in the prime of life, who had once been a member of a Presbyterian Mission school but had renounced Christianity and had returned to Vao in order to rebuild the fortunes of his family by an intensive prosecution of megalithic ritual. This man was descended from the former inhabitants of the now submerged island of Tolamp which once flourished between Atchin and Vao, who, owing to historical circumstances to be recounted below, hold a privileged position in the cycle of megalithic rites. His information was therefore of the highest value. Not having time to learn the language of Vao, which is different from that of Atchin though the two islands are only three miles apart, my work with him was carried out in pidgin-English supplemented by comparisons with Atchin, which I spoke sufficiently well by that time to serve as a useful check. On matters of tribal history and kinship his information was supplemented by interviews with Pelur, one of the leading men on Vao, whose photograph appears on Plates V and VIII, who knew no pidgin-English and for whom Ma-taru acted as interpreter. Added to this was the fact that I had evolved a highly efficient technique of recording and cross-referencing which was the admiration of the natives, who believed therefore that anything I had once learnt I never forgot.

It had been my original intention to include in this introductory volume only the information thus recorded, together with a survey of Small Island culture as a whole in order to place it in its proper setting. When I had already started preparing this material for publication, however, my attention was called to an account of certain aspects of Vao ritual that had appeared in *Les Missions Catholiques*, a French Mission journal, from the pen of the Rev. Jean Godefroy, S.M., who had succeeded Père Jamond after my visit as Marist priest on Vao. Perusal of this showed it to be of great value, particularly since the aspects of Vao culture that it dealt with were in the main other than those that I had myself investigated. At the same time, where his information coincided with mine he showed such a high degree of accuracy and understanding of the problems that I had every confidence that those parts of his work that I was myself not able to check were equally reliable. It was therefore with the greatest regret that I read, half-way through the serial publication of his work, that Père Godefroy had died from elephantiasis in Vila after a vain trip to Europe to re-establish his health. Nevertheless, being desirous to make my own volume on Vao as complete as

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PLATE VIII

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124
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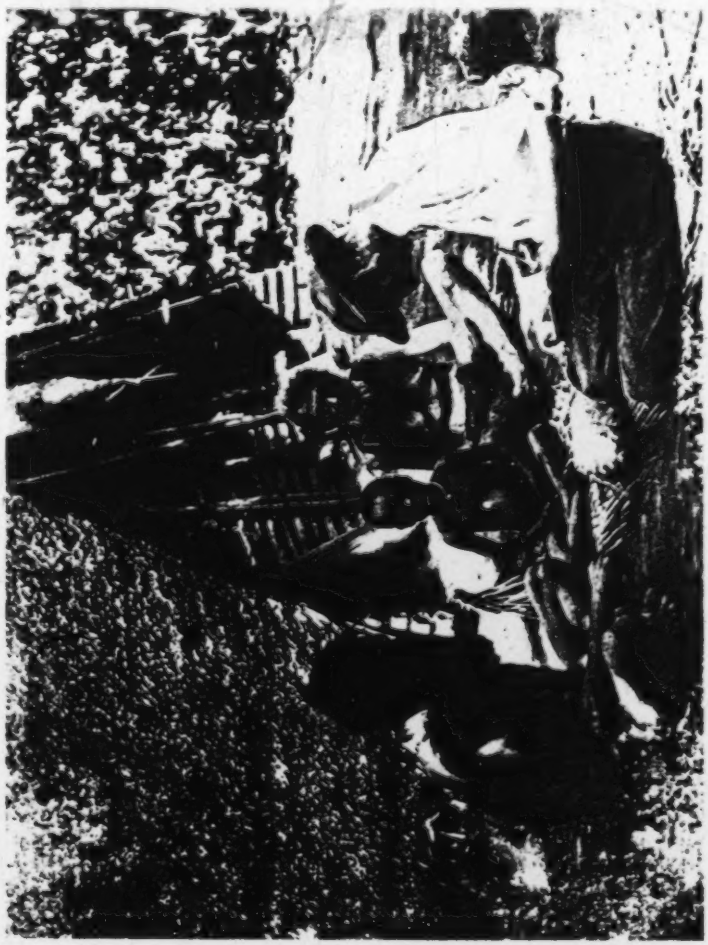

The aged Pelur, of Togh-vanu, holds forth on tribal history which the author records with the help of Ma-taru of Tolamp, whose son Na-sum sits listening too. The scene is the courtyard of Pelur's lodge

[facing p. 84]